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ABSTRACT

Volunteerism is increasing today and helps to fill in the gaps created by funding and staff cutbacks in service-oriented agencies. It is critical not only to recruit new volunteers but to retain volunteers. This study examines hospice volunteers for motivation and rewards. Previous studies have found motivations to include altruism and self-actualization and rewards to include social interaction and recognition. Forty hospice volunteers (29 females and 11 males) completed a questionnaire and Rotter's Internal-External Locus of Control Scale. Participants were asked what kinds of activity they performed and their primary reason for volunteering. Fifty-two percent cited inner-directed reasons indicating personal interest or benefit. Thirty-eight percent cited other-directed reasons indicating concern for others. Other respondents combined inner- and other-directed reasons or did not cite reasons. The hospice volunteer directors were questioned about rewards. Rewards included certificates of appreciation, banquets, service pins, bookmarks, free meals, and free parking. Little relationship was found between volunteer motivations and reward structure. Agencies could be more creative by taking into account the needs and talents of the volunteers when creating job descriptions and roles thereby probably reducing volunteer burnout. It is also probable that supervision as needed over and above the supervision regularly supplied provides the support, encouragement and rewards most valued by these volunteers. (ABL)

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Volunteer Motivations and Rewards: Shaping Future Programs

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Abstract

In shaping our destiny, helping professionals are concerned about individual differences not only of clients but also of their fellow helpers. With the increased utilization of volunteers as a complementary resource in service delivery, there is a need to investigate the motivations of this group as well as the reward mechanisms of agencies. This paper reviews previous studies about the motivations and rewards of volunteers including a recent comparative study of social welfare agencies and organizations in New York City and London and examines a sample of hospice volunteers in light of locus of control and agency reward structures.

VOLUNTEER MOTIVATIONS AND REWARDS:

SHAPING FUTURE PROGRAMS

Increasing of numbers of Americans are volunteering for work in service-oriented agencies and organizations. There is more participation from such diverse groups as senior citizens, professionals, and youth. Whether board memberships or clerical tasks, the activities of these individuals help to fill the gaps in services created by funding and staff cutbacks. One of the critical issues facing volunteerism today is the retention of these volunteers once recruited. The purpose of this paper is to review previous studies about the motivations and rewards of volunteers including a recent comparative study of social welfare agencies and organizations in New York City and London and to examine a specific group of volunteers (hospice volunteers) in light of locus of control and agency reward structure.

Motivation and Rewards

Surveys of volunteer characteristics have shown that there is no typical volunteer and there is no single motivation for volunteering (Cull & Hardy, 1974; Engs & Kirk, 1974; Evans & Goldberg, 1970; Hayler, 1975; Schwartz, 1970). The motivations are as diverse as the individuals. In fact, Naylor (1976) cautions that even the motivations of a single volunteer may change, i.e., the reasons for and feelings about being a volunteer at the beginning may be very different from those which keep a person active in volunteer work. Categorically, however, the motivation for volunteer work can no longer be considered purely altruistic. The appearance of self-interest or self-actualization as a primary motivation has been documented (Ausetts, LoSciuto, & Aiken, 1980; Engs & Kirk, 1974; Garvack & Jabes, 1980; Gidron, 1978; Hayler, 1975; Schindler - Raiman & Lippitt, 1971), and there is evidence of a trend toward this motivation (Suarez & Ricketson, 1974). The expectation that

an increase in this motive might mean a reduction in altruistic motivation has also been suggested (Ausetts, LoScuito, & Aiken, 1980).

There seems to be no doubt that rewards are important to volunteers (Lauffer, 1982; Lauffer & Gorodezky, 1977) and constitute a major structural component of volunteer programs (Hayler, 1975; Jacobson, 1978; LaCour, 1976; Lauffer & Gorodezky, 1977; Qureshi, et al., 1979). Rewards may also play a major role in the volunteer's decision to continue over long periods of time by preventing burnout (Lenihan & Jackson, 1984). The dilemma, then, appears to be with the types of rewards offered by agencies and organizations.

Volunteers do expect rewards; however, the expectations of rewards differ from one person to another (Gidron, 1978). Lauffer (1982) suggests that each individual has his/her own hierarchy of valued rewards consisting of intrinsic and extrinsic rewards. Intrinsic rewards would include those which come from the work itself and the relationships established in doing the work. Recognition, promotion to increasingly more responsible areas within the agency, or the opportunity to work on special or innovative projects are examples of extrinsic rewards. Pearce (1983) found that volunteers in similar jobs doing the same work as employees differed in job attitudes and placed different relative importance on work rewards that were equally available to both groups. Volunteers reported that they work for the rewards of social interaction and service to others, that their work is more praiseworthy, and that they are more satisfied and less likely to leave their organizations.

An area of concern for volunteer programs has been the provision of financial rewards to volunteers, i.e., the reimbursement of the costs incurred by the volunteer such as transportation or child-care costs (Chapin, 1977; McClam & Spicuzza, 1983). For many agencies and organizations, this is not an issue due to limited financial resources. For other groups, this has been

considered as a means to increase the numbers of volunteers recruited; however, Garvack and Jabes (1980) explored this issue in relation to hospital volunteers and concluded from their study that volunteers will react adversely to financial rewards with a decrease in performance and disinterest in continuing their work. Verbal praise was perceived as information and resulted in no performance decreases and no negative attitudes.

The practical problems of designing organizational reward systems for volunteers not based on monetary compensation are addressed in the managerial literature of volunteerism (Naylor, 1976; Schindler - Raiman & Lippitt, 1971). A major problem is the differing expectations of individuals. Gidron (1983) indicates that the existence of similarities of expectations among volunteers of similar age should prove helpful. He found that younger volunteers are more likely to be interested in rewards dealing with learning and self-development whereas older volunteers are more likely to be interested in dealing with social interaction.

An examination of the rewards for volunteers in social welfare agencies and organizations in New York and London provides information on current practices (McClam & Spicuzza, 1983). A survey analysis of selected social service agencies and organizations in New York (n=95) and London (n=162) revealed that a letter of appreciation is the most popular method of recognition in both cities, followed closely by certificates of merit in New York and annual luncheons/dinners in London. Surprisingly, 24% of the agencies surveyed in London offered no formal recognition as compared with 3% in New York. Several New York City respondents specified other awards such as self-satisfaction, references, and free tickets to fund-raising events while London respondents specified that human enrichment and self-satisfaction were rewards in and of themselves.

Rewards, then, are an essential component of most volunteer programs. The

type of reward is also important. A closer investigation of the relationship between motivations and rewards may have implications for the drop-out rate. People who volunteer are motivated by a variety of factors. A consideration of the motives of each volunteer, may lead to more appropriate and meaningful reward systems. The following study of hospice volunteers investigates the following questions: 1) Why do these individuals volunteer? 2) How useful is the locus of control construct in determining appropriate rewards? and 3) What rewards are actually provided by the hospices surveyed?

The Volunteers

Forty hospice volunteers from six major hospitals in Middle and East Tennessee participated in the study. Each was asked to complete a questionnaire and Rotter's Internal-External Locus of Control Scale (1966). Participation was voluntary and anonymity was assured.

The 29 females and 11 males ranged in age from 19 to 92. Sixty-two percent were retired or housewives; others included businessmen, a mortician, secretaries, mechanics, teachers, and nurses. Twenty percent completed high school, 43% had completed some college, 17% had college degrees, and 20% had studied at the graduate level. Nine had volunteered for less than one year in a hospice setting, 17 one to four years, and 14 five or more years. Respondents were asked to describe the kinds of volunteer activities they performed. Activities included visiting families and patients, fundraising, participating in family-patient groups, and assisting nursing staff. Only four respondents indicated they performed clerical tasks. To determine motivations for becoming a hospice volunteer, each respondent was asked to provide a primary reason. Responses were coded as inner-directed, other-directed or both. Inner directed responses (52%) were those which indicated a personal interest or benefit. Examples are as follows: "To grow"; "Enjoyment of helping others"; "Interest in

the work of hospice"; "I felt I would get more out of it than I put in"; "For work experience"; and "I wanted to learn how to deal with cancer patients." Other-directed responses (38%) were those which expressed regard or concern for the interests of others. This category included responses such as "helping others," "interest in other people," "needed service in the community", and "offering my assistance to another human being". Responses which combined inner-and other-directed such as "helping people, feeling of self-worth" were coded both (8%). Two percent did not provide reasons.

Participants were also asked to complete the Internal-External Locus of Control Scale (Rotter, 1966) which measures the degree to which an individual believes that reinforcements are contingent upon his/her own behavior (Joe, 1971). Internal control refers to individuals who believe that reinforcements are contingent upon their own behavior, capacities, or attributes; external control refers to individuals who believe reinforcements are under the control of powerful others, luck, fate, or chance. Depending on past reinforcement experiences, a person will have developed a consistent attitude tending toward an external or internal locus as a source of reinforcement. Scores can range from 0 (most internal) to 23 (most external). Knowing an individual's locus of control could be useful in determining effective rewards, i.e. extrinsic rewards might be more meaningful for external and intrinsic for internals. Participant's scores ranged from 0 to 16 with 70% scoring between 1 and 7. This sample, then, tends toward an internal locus of control.

The Rewards

The Volunteer Coordinator or Hospice Director at each of the six hospices responded to a brief questionnaire to determine if rewards are provided to hospice volunteers, and if so, what they are. Four of the six indicated that they do provide rewards, one does not, and one, although not providing a reward, stated that the reward was the "inner satisfaction of doing something for your

fellow man". Rewards utilized included letters, calls, and/or certificates of appreciation, 2; banquets and parties, 1; service pins,2; and bookmarks, free meals, and free parking, one each.

Formal supervision is provided by all six coordinators/directors on a daily or weekly basis. Four of the six indicated that supervision is also provided as needed. Many times, this may take the form of support, encouragement, and/or reassurance.

Discussion

How related are the rewards of agencies and organizations to the motivations of volunteers? According to this study, there appears to be little relationship between volunteer motivations or job activities and the formal reward structure of the agency. The rewards provided by the six hospices in this study are typical of volunteer rewards in a variety of settings. Participants' motivations, however, do reflect the recognition of diverse volunteer motivations noted in the literature, particularly those motivations of self-interest or self-actualizaiton as well as altruism. In the past, reward structures have not been related to altruistic motivations so it is not surprising that they are not related to self-interest or self-actualization.

Agencies and organizations can be creative in their reward structures by considering several factors. Taken into account the needs, talents, expectations, and skills of individuals, rewards can be built into job descriptions and the assignment of roles. This information can be obtained through formal interviews, written applications, and informal conversation with the volunteer. With additional research, the use of mechanisms such as the Internal-External Locus of Control Scale may also provide clues as to effective reinforcement strategies.

A strong link between motivations and rewards would almost certainly have an impact on retention and the potential burnout of volunteers. The idea of

personalizing rewards presents a real challenge to agencies and organizations which have reduced staff, increased client loads, and budget cutbacks; however, the high costs of recruiting and training volunteers may provide an incentive to sustain the commitment of volunteers.

Over half of the sample in the present study reported motivations of self-interest or self-actualization. They also tended toward an internal locus of control. It would appear, then, that the rewards most appropriate and effective for this group are intrinsic, i.e., rewards and relationships that come from the work itself. One hospice recognizing this fact, did not provide any of the usual rewards such as pins and banquets.

One caution regarding this sample needs to be considered. The intrinsic nature of the tasks performed and the population served contribute to the uniqueness of hospice volunteers. Not every person is suited, psychologically or otherwise, for work with the dying patient and it often takes more than humanitarian desire to help the less fortunate. Frequently, the motivation for the hospice volunteer is the product of a previous personal experience with tragedy or the death of a family member or a significant other. (Ching & Ramsey, 1984-85). It has also been suggested that this group has more knowledge of death-related needs and has made some attempt to come to terms with their own mortality (Mantell & Ell, 1985). Since all hospices surveyed provide supervision, it is probable that supervision as needed as well as supervision on a regular basis provides the support, encouragement, and rewards most valued by these volunteers.

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